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# Where is Knowing Going? The Horizons of the Knowing Subject

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Where is Knowing Going? The Horizons of the Knowing Subject

John C. Haughey, S.J.

Georgetown University Press, 2009

\$34.95, 192 pages

Reviewed by Daniel B. Gallagher

During his visit to the United States in April of 2008, Pope Benedict XVI expressed his gratitude to teachers and administrators in American Catholic colleges and universities for their “professionalism and witness.” He also acknowledged the challenges they face due to evolving cultural, demographic, and academic milieus in this country. On the one hand, “Catholic identity is not dependent upon statistics,” and on the other, it cannot “be equated simply with orthodoxy of course content” (p. 3). To help educators navigate through these extremes, the pope proposed the virtue of “intellectual charity,” which calls them “to recognize that the profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love” (p. 3).

The virtue proposed by Benedict invites comparison with the virtue proposed by John C. Haughey in his recent book, namely, “hospitality.” Haughey explains that the virtue of hospitality gives shape to the overarching goal of Catholic colleges and universities, which is to search for the whole. The knowledge gained in specialized disciplines is only part of the larger picture that will come to light when members of a university cultivate this virtue and thus benefit from a mutual exchange of insights that will help to advance one another’s aims and projects. This, Haughey argues, accords with the Gospel parables, which teach that “it is through our interactions with and reactions to those different from us that we learn to see more clearly who we are, and what we believe” (p. 34).

Accordingly, Haughey proposes “catholicity” as a notion co-extensive with Lonergan’s “being” and “value,” noting that he differs from Lonergan insofar as what he judges “to be true is not always meaning bearing, and the concrete good is also not always meaning bearing, though they are potentially so” (p. 46). This is linked to Haughey’s lament that “catholicity” is often conflated with the designation of the Church as “Catholic,” since the former “is

more pregnant with meaning than it should be by being confined to that one usage" (p. 45).

Therein lies a general difficulty with Haughey's approach. There is certainly room for a theoretical distinction between the "catholicity" that denotes the university's quest for wholeness and "Catholic" as applied to the Church founded by Christ, entrusted to Peter's care, governed by apostolic authority, and professed in the creed. There is even a legitimate tension between theological speculation and Magisterial teaching, particularly when it comes to unresolved questions (see Benedict XVI, 2009). However, Haughey fails to acknowledge that the "catholicity" (in the sense of wholeness) of a "Catholic" (in the ecclesial sense) university emanates from and is oriented to the universality of salvation wrought by Jesus as the one mediator. Recognizing this unicity does not preclude the legitimate diversity and autonomy that serve to enrich the intellectual life of Catholic campuses. This is why Haughey is correct in asserting that catholicity implies that no portion of reality is alien to the interest of a Catholic university. Such was also the message of Pope Benedict in April of 2008. Haughey's analogy of the two natures of Christ help to advance this idea. But he goes too far in asserting that "the dynamism of catholicity is toward a fullness it never possesses; it awaits a wholeness that beckons rather than materializes" (p. 45). Notwithstanding the expectation of the *eschaton*, the dynamism of catholicity does indeed mean the possession of a fullness and the enjoyment of a wholeness "materialized" through the Paschal mystery and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Haughey's emphasis on the incompleteness of catholicity's dynamism is further evidenced by his epistemology. Relying heavily on Lonergan, he insists that the way to knowledge begins with a grasp of one's subjectivity. This extricates us from a preoccupation with concepts and curbs the temptation to let others do our thinking. Whether or not one agrees with Haughey's reading of Lonergan, it seems hyperbolic to claim that knowledge is gained not so much by looking at objects than by focusing on the inquiring subject and the compound character of the cognitive act. The immediacy of knowing and the irrepressible urge to understand the world precisely as *other* is indeed the beginning of science. This is not to undermine the importance of subjective experience and intentionality, which Haughey rightly declares to be crucial for understanding how "being" is a dynamic principle leading us to an ever-greater realization of the good. However, a robust epistemology does not necessarily entail a cavalier certainty about knowledge acquired through scientific investigation, and a robust Christology privileging the idea that Jesus had a clear vision of his mission neither attenuates his human knowledge nor his ability to share fully in our humanity. Hence it is potentially misleading

for Haughey to characterize Jesus's life as "an open narrative that kept developing new insights" (though Jesus did "increase in wisdom"; p. 33) and his "humanity" as something "other than God" (though there is a distinction between his human and divine natures; p. 72).

Haughey's book illustrates that maybe the issue facing Catholic colleges and universities in this country today is not whether they should embrace their "catholicity," but what we mean by that term. Perhaps the difference between "intellectual charity" and "hospitality" also depends on how we define that term. If by "catholicity" we mean a fullness that can never be possessed and a wholeness that can never be materialized (at least in this world), then adhering to a body of doctrine and a moral code will stymie an institution's ability to reach out to the world, and "hospitality" is the most we can hope for. If, on the other hand, we mean new life through a liberating truth and a redeeming wholeness—namely, Jesus Christ—then it is precisely the institution's "Catholicity" which will enable it to embrace the world in genuine "intellectual charity."

### References

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## The Gospel According to *Star Wars*: Faith, Hope, and the Force

John C. McDowell  
Westminster John Knox Press, 2007  
\$14.95, 204 pages

Reviewed by Michael Zelenka

For many people in their mid-20s to early 40s, the original *Star Wars Trilogy* gave them cause to hope in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, along with a drawer full of Stormtroopers, Ewoks, X-Wing Fighters, and Jedi. The